

Building the Future Together

Good Neighbors

Upcoming Classes and Events



Here are just a few of the many classes and events offered by Children's. To register, obtain more information or view the complete calendar, go to www.seattlechildrens.org/classes or call 206-987-2000.

Better Babysitters | Saturdays, Feb. 21 and March 28

9 a.m. to 2 p.m., \$40 per person

Meal Support Training for Parents of Children 12-18 | Wednesdays, Jan. 14, 21, 28 and Feb. 4 and 11

6 to 7:30 p.m., \$320 per family

For Boys Only: The Joys and Challenges of Growing Up | Wednesdays, Jan. 19 and 26

6:30 to 8:30 p.m. \$50 per parent/son pair; \$10 per additional child

For Girls Only: A Heart to Heart Talk on Growing Up | Thursdays, March 5 and 12

6:30 to 8:30 p.m. \$50 per parent/daughter pair; \$10 per additional child.

Children's offers families and staff free tours of the hospital grounds. For dates and times, e-mail julie.povick@seattlechildrens.org.

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www.friendsofchildrenshospital.org



Good Neighbors

Emergency Department Picks Up the Pace



Dr. Tony Woodward knows what a perfect emergency department would look like. “Ideally,” he said, “it wouldn’t have a waiting room.”

Woodward understands that’s not realistic. However, as director of emergency medicine at Seattle Children’s, Woodward is committed to keeping the waiting room in our Emergency Department as empty as possible by improving the way care is delivered.

“It’s discouraging for people to walk into a crowded waiting room and think it will take forever to be seen,” Woodward said. “We’ve taken a lot of steps to help us see patients in a more timely fashion while at the same time accommodating increased demand.”

Example: creating a new communications center. The center collects information about incoming patients from community physicians and systematically shares it with Emergency Department caregivers so they can begin planning before patients arrive.

With approximately 40,000 patient visits a year, our Emergency Department is a busy place. It’s the go-to ED for families from Washington, Alaska, Montana and Idaho whose children need the kind of specialized care found only at a comprehensive pediatric hospital. Like emergency departments everywhere, it’s also a safety net for those who lack a doctor of their own or who want to see a doctor after hours.

As many as 20 patients may be admitted in a single hour, arriving by helicopter, ambulance or the family car. While critically ill or injured patients never wait to be seen, those with a fever or stomach ache sometimes do.

Waiting is more than an inconvenience. It’s potentially risky. “When we can’t see a patient right away, we’re missing an opportunity to provide our best care and prevent the problem from possibly becoming something more serious,” Woodward said.

The Emergency Department has expanded its urgent care capabilities

and access, where those who are not critically ill or injured can be seen between 11 a.m. and 1 a.m. – preventing them from repeatedly being forced to the back of the line by an influx of more urgent cases.

The Emergency Department added seven new beds in 2007 and now has 25. With patient visits expected to top 60,000 within the next few years, Woodward foresees a need to provide 40 to 50 beds when the hospital expands.

“No matter how efficient we become,” said Woodward, “we will need more space to provide optimal care and access for our children.”

Observation Unit Relieves Pressure

If 250 patients show up at a 250-bed hospital, where would the 251st patient go?

Seattle Children’s is a busy place and is often nearly full. It has identified 11 inpatient access projects to address a serious capacity problem and increase our ability to care for patients – including this month’s opening of a full-time Observation Unit.

We’ve experienced an 11.5 percent increase in hospitalized patients over last year. The new Observation Unit will free up inpatient rooms by providing seven beds for ‘short stay’ patients who need close monitoring and require care for less than 24 hours.

“These kids are almost ready to go home and will receive care by a dedicated medical team,” said Dr. Glen Tamura, director of the Observation Unit. “We’re working to provide the appropriate care for patients in the right place at the right time.”





Orthopedics Team Responds to Demand

Meet Dr. Ernest Conrad

As director of the Orthopedics Department, Dr. Ernest Conrad leads the busiest clinic at Seattle Children's. **Visits to the orthopedics clinic, which treat injuries and conditions involving bones, joints and muscles, have climbed from 10,000 per year when Conrad became director three years ago to 22,000 per year today.**

Yet increased volumes have not led to longer waits. The average wait for an appointment is shorter now – seven or eight days – than it was before – 30 days.

“Access is a huge issue for us,” Conrad said. “We’re constantly looking for opportunities to become more efficient while serving more patients.”

An improved scheduling system enables patients to see multiple

caregivers in a single visit. And by matching doctors with nurses and medical assistants to form teams, the clinic has expanded opportunities for patients to receive care – if not from the doctor then from a practitioner who works closely with the doctor.

Conrad joined the medical staffs at Children's and the University of Washington in 1986. “I was interested in bone tumors,” he said. “They didn't have programs here at the time, so I saw an opportunity.”

The pediatric and adult bone-tumor programs Conrad started at Children's and the UW both feature specialists working together in multi-disciplinary teams. “I enjoy team-building,” Conrad said. “Working with patients in my

own practice is very satisfying, but developing programs and watching them grow is especially rewarding.”

During the last few years, the orthopedics clinic has added three new doctors – with plans to add three or four more – and launched specialty practices in sports medicine, spine surgery and skeletal dysplasias such as dwarfism.

The growth of orthopedics at Children's reflects the community's increasing desire for specialized pediatric care, Conrad said. “The bones of children are still growing and that complicates treatment,” he said. “If you're a doctor who sees mostly adult patients, it can be very challenging.”



Child Health and Safety

Keep it Down!

What comes in many colors, fits in a pocket and may cause lifelong hearing loss? An MP3 player.

Yes, it's true. According to the American Academy of Audiology (AAA), using headphones at high volumes for long periods of time can cause lasting hearing loss. More than 5 million children have hearing loss caused by noise, often because they are listening to their music way too loud.

So, what can your child do to keep their ears safe? Experts from the AAA have some tips:

- Keep the volume down whenever listening to music, especially while wearing headphones. A good guide is half volume.
- Limit listening time. Give your ears quiet breaks.
- Buy music and media players with a volume limiter. You can also buy a volume limiter for use with existing headphones.
- Buy earphones that fit outside the ear instead of earbuds that fit inside the ear.

To Learn More

- Visit www.seattlechildrens.org/goodgrowing, www.turnittotheleft.com or www.listentoyourbuds.com.

Santa Lifts Spirits

No doubt about it. Santa works long hours. But he's never too busy to visit every child at Seattle Children's on Christmas Day. And neither is Dr. John Neff.

Neff, medical director of the Center for Children with Special Needs, has spent Christmas Day at the hospital for more than 15 years. In the beginning, he helped Santa go from room to room handing out presents. Now ... hmmm ... let's just say you never see him and Santa together.

Santa arrives at Children's around 9 a.m. and visits up to 200 patients before hopping in his sleigh six hours later. "The holidays can be a hard time for children in the hospital and their families," Neff said. **"Santa represents a spirit of giving and a message of hope that cuts across all cultures."**

Neff's wife, Lee, his daughter, Heidi, and a friend, Melinda Mueller, also spend Christmas Day at Children's as do many staff members who choose to work that day. "It's a way to show appreciation and do something meaningful on Christmas," Neff said.



Hospital Supports Playground Project

Students at Laurelhurst Elementary School will spend recess on a much improved playground thanks to the efforts of the surrounding community.

Planning for the project began three years ago and construction is now underway. The city is providing half of the money and the community, led by the Laurelhurst School Community Playground Renovation Committee, is raising the rest - including a pair of \$5,000 donations from Children's.

"We appreciate the money, but beyond that we appreciate the recognition from Children's that playgrounds are important," said Coco Sherman, a Laurelhurst resident and co-chair of the renovation project along with Melissa Kane.

The playground will serve the entire neighborhood, not just Laurelhurst students, and is a short walk from Children's for families visiting the hospital.

The project will replace outdated playground equipment that is too small for many children to use and does not meet current handicap codes.

"This has really pulled the community together," Sherman said. "I couldn't be more proud of what we're trying to accomplish."

E-mail cocosherman@comcast.net for more information.

Donors Spread Holiday Joy

"Many of these families must travel a great distance and leave their homes and jobs so they can be with their child during treatment"

The emotional and financial strain of having a child in the hospital can steal some joy from the holiday season.

The Holiday Program at Seattle Children's puts it back. Every year, the program matches dozens of donors with dozens of families whose spirits need a lift.

Children's social workers identify the families, create lists of their needs and wants, and give the lists to donors from the community - individuals, families, businesses and organizations who buy multiple gifts for everyone in the family.

"Everybody struggles with the illness of a child, so it's important to take care of the whole family," said Eve Kopp, director of Corporate Annual Giving at the Seattle Children's Foundation.

The number of recipients grows every year. This year, social workers will deliver gifts to more than 60 families.

"Many of these families must travel a great distance and leave their homes and jobs so they can be with their child during treatment," she said. "Our donors are so generous and the families are so grateful. It's a dream come true."

John L. Scott Real Estate underwrites the Holiday Program, including the cost to store and deliver the gifts and coordinate the program.

E-mail holiday.program@seattlechildrens.org to learn more.